

Physical Best and FitnessGram use among United States PETE Programs

Abstract

Physical education is an important academic discipline to a students' education. A health-related fitness curriculum focusing on life-long physical fitness as a supplement to an existing curriculum is important to our mission of curbing childhood obesity. The National Association of Sport and Physical Education provides teachers with such a curriculum in the Physical Best (PB) curriculum. Literature also suggests that with the creation of the Presidential Youth Fitness Program that FitnessGram (FG) will now be the only nationally supported fitness testing tool. With this being the case, it is important for all PETE majors to be certified to administer the PB. For this study, researchers surveyed Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) programs across the nation (N=97). The survey consisted of six major questions as well as more specific questions based on their responses. Participants were also asked to explain specific answers. The purpose of the study was to establish how many PETE programs use the PB curriculum as well as the FG software. Specifically, 53% (N=52) use the PB curriculum in some capacity and 64% (N=62) use the FG software.

Introduction

The Physical Best (PB) curriculum was launched in 1987 with a mission of fostering a healthier youth by providing quality resources and professional development for educators (American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 2005a). The PB mission is achieved by: (a) providing students with the education and skills needed to develop lifelong physical activity habits, (b) presenting the why's and how's of physical fitness, and (c) emphasizing individualization and enjoyment. Achieving the PB mission requires that teachers go beyond traditional means of teaching health-related fitness and focus on the why's and how's of lifelong fitness to inspire students to internalize health-enhancing behaviors and beliefs (Ayers & Martinez, 2007).

With the recent adoption of the FG (a component of PB) into the Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP), a major shift has been initiated toward focusing on making kids healthy and fit for life. This new rollout of the PYFP signals a move from a norm-referenced assessment using the President's Challenge Youth Fitness Test to assessing health using the FG ("Presidential Youth Fitness Program," 2012). This puts PB in a unique position to become a major catalyst in advancing a new criterion-referenced agenda, with the FG already being utilized as an integral component of the PB curriculum. To accomplish this mission, it will take certified professionals to integrate the PB programming into their practice and administer the FG. To provide an accurate portrayal of current PB application in the classroom and correlating usage of the FG, this study aimed to investigate the practical application of PB and FG usage by certified PB practitioners in classrooms across the United States.

Subjects

PETE professionals from all known PETE programs in the nation were sent emails with a link to a survey asking about their PETE program's use of the PB curriculum as well as FG software. PETE professionals from different Universities agreed to participate in the study and filled out the survey (N=97), representing 46 states in the nation.

Instrument

A review of literature failed to identify an instrument related to PETE programs usage of the PB curriculum. As such, the researchers constructed a survey from discussions with PETE professionals from peer institutions. The researchers constructed a survey of five specific questions and potentially eight more questions. When the question was a yes/no statement, depending upon the answer, a follow up question was often asked. To establish content validity, the researcher had five experienced PETE professionals along with three general education professionals review the survey, and found the statements from the survey and follow-up questions to be appropriate and valid.

Procedures

For this study, the researchers used a compiled list of email addresses of PETE faculty in the US and sent them a link to the survey using Survey Monkey, online survey system. Participants were asked to fill out the survey representing their program and if there was a more qualified faculty member to answer questions about PB and FG. They were also asked to forward the survey to anyone at a University not in the list. In order to establish the wide range of the programs represented, as well as to ensure no University was represented twice, participants were initially asked what state they were from and what University they represented. After a week, those who had not responded were sent a follow-up email distribution asking them to please take time to complete the survey. After the second email distribution, the Universities with PETE programs in states not yet represented were identified and specific emails were sent to these Universities requesting their participation. In the end, 92% (N=46) of the states and 97 total Universities were represented. Results for this study are reported as percentages along with notable respondent comments.

Question 1

Do you currently use NASPE's Physical Best curriculum with your Physical Education Teacher Education program (PETE)? Explain your answer.

Yes 53% (N=52)
No 47% (N=45)

1a. Is the curriculum used in one specific course or infused throughout the entire curriculum? (N=52)

One Course 50% (N=26)
Entire Curriculum 50% (N=26)

Question 2

Do you use the FitnessGram and/or software in your PETE program? (N=97)

Yes 64% (N=62)
No 36% (N=35)

2a. Which software do you use? (N=62)

FitnessGram Only 71% (N=44)
ActivityGram Only 2% (N=1)
Both 27% (N=17)

2b. What do you use the FitnessGram/ActivityGram for? (N=62)

One Specific Class 39% (N=24)
Throughout the Curriculum 61% (N=38)

Question 3

Have you personally taken the Physical Best in Higher Education course offered by NASPE? (N=97)

Yes 19% (N=18)
No 81% (N=79)

Question 4

Do you certify your students as Physical Best Specialists during their time in your program? (N=97)

Yes 16% (N=16)
No 84% (N=81)

Question 5

Do you use the Physical Best Activity Guides in your curriculum? (N=97)

No 49% (N=48)
Elementary Only 11% (N=11)
Middle/High School 2% (N=2)
Both 37% (N=36)

5a. Do you prefer one of the other? (N=49)

Yes 14% (N=7)
No 86% (N=42)

Question 6

Do you view the Physical best curriculum as beneficial to your teacher education students? Please explain. (N=52)

Yes 94% (N=49)
No 6% (N=3)

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to establish how many PETE programs use the PB curriculum as well as the FG software. The results of the data gathered from this study show that 53% (N=52) of the programs surveyed do use the program, representing just over half of those who responded (N=97). With the PB curriculum being the only health-related fitness curriculum created by NASPE and the fact it can be infused into a preexisting curriculum, the researchers were surprised to not find more use of the curriculum in PETE programs. While only 53% used the curriculum, most cited reasons not directly related to the PB curriculum for why they don't. Reasons provided indicated, "Trying to incorporate - waiting on faculty approval.", "We are currently integrating use of the NASPE Standards, but have not progressed to Physical Best Curriculum just yet", and "Mentioned as one of many curricula but not specifically taught because of limited curricular time." The closest comment that could be found to not support the curriculum was, "We use other materials instead that better meet our state certification standards." So, while some participants stated that the PB curriculum was not effective for their PETE students, it was because their state standards did not align well.

Recommendations

The results from this study suggest that about half of the PETE programs in the nation use the PB curriculum in their PETE programs. With that, 64% use FG software. With the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition (PCFSN) recent announcement that the former Physical Fitness Test is now the PYFP and that it will focus primarily on assessing health versus athleticism for American youth, PETE programs need to do more to expose their students to the tools necessary to make them successful in any school district they are hired. The PYFP has chosen FG as their official physical fitness assessment tool and the PB curriculum is the perfect tool for accomplishing their goal of educating students on the five components of fitness (Aerobic Fitness, Muscular Strength, Muscular Endurance, Flexibility, and Body Composition).

References

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